

# CASE STUDY #2



## EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD SECTOR PLANNING REVIEW

**Dialogue Partners** was retained by Edmonton Public Schools to engage the community and stakeholders in a comprehensive process that would explore how to make the best possible use of available resources so that all students have access to vibrant schools and a range of quality programs. Declining enrollment,

surplus school space and insufficient student based funding were contributing factors. The goal was to engage the community in a values-based dialogue that weighed community priorities with the financial and infrastructure realities and identify a path for the future.

**WHAT HAPPENED:** We worked with the public, stakeholders and staff in a multi-phased values-based approach. Part 1 of the project focused on two City Centre areas with 11 schools under review, while Part 2 of the project took place in 3 larger sectors with 70 schools under review. For both parts of the project, we conducted a detailed conflict assessment and used the input to develop the public engagement plans.

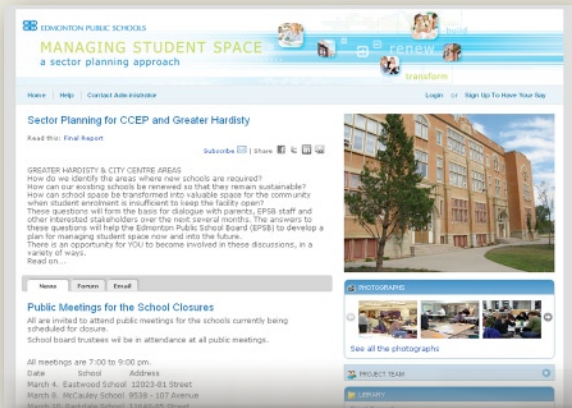
In Part 1, **Dialogue Partners** conducted outreach to over 6000+ participants using 16 distinct communication tools, hosted 21 different engagement activities or events, and gathered input from 600+ participants using workshops, deliberative workbooks, open space process and online consultation. For every event, we produced a "What was Said" report, and in most cases, an evaluation report. Input gathered has resulted in useful information for decision-making.

In Part 2, **Dialogue Partners** conducted Open Space Forums, deliberative workbooks, online discussion, YOUth Talk sessions in schools and workshops. Part 2 concludes in late 2010, and we'll update this case study on the results of that part of the project then.

**THINGS WE LEARNED ALONG THE WAY:** High emotion, conflict and a wide diversity of viewpoints were present. We used a step-by-step methodology, capacity building with the organization and stakeholders, and a values-based process to address these issues in the engagement process. A lack of trust and a need to demonstrate commitments and transparency were fundamental to meaningful outcomes. Supporting participant understanding of the complexity and challenges of the issues and viewpoints was important to developing options that were sustainable. We had to work hard to help all participants, including elected officials, understand that "don't close schools" is a simple solution that wouldn't address the complexity of values or challenges present in the discussion.

### COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

**Dialogue Partners** was engaged by Edmonton Public Schools to engage the community and stakeholders in a comprehensive consultation. The project included workshops and capacity building training so participants could host their own conversations on the issue. We also held workshops and training with staff and the community on meaningful public engagement and values based consultation.



<http://sectorreview2010.com/sector-review>



Project evaluations rated participant satisfaction with openness, transparency and meaningful process at over 70%.

